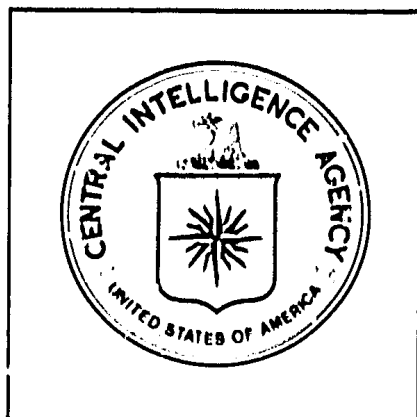


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SOVIET UNION - EASTERN EUROPE

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the USSR - Eastern Europe Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome.

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Roy Medvedev on the Soviet Leadership

Dissident historian Roy Medvedev offered some lucid and intelligent comments on the Soviet leadership at a social function in Moscow on January 22.

Medvedev has ties in the intellectual community which give him access to gossip and probably some occasional second- and third-hand bits of political information. He is also well known to Western newsmen and diplomats, and his thoughts are probably influenced by ideas and information current abroad. Medvedev is, however, an astute and articulate observer of Kremlin politics. We agree with the general sense of his presentation and many of his particular observations. Following are a few points we think need to be qualified.

--Medvedev says that Brezhnev's personal staff has become extremely large and powerful--even more powerful than the party Secretariat. It is true that Brezhnev's staff has grown in size and influence, especially in terms of its foreign policy responsibilities. Medvedev exaggerates this development, however. Brezhnev's personal aides number only a little over a half dozen and cannot rival the Secretariat in power.

--Medvedev asserts that Brezhnev's position is completely secure and that he will go on ruling as long as he wants to and is capable of doing so. We judge Brezhnev's position to be relatively secure, but he does not have the present and future entirely within his hands. Medvedev ignores the dynamics of collective leadership which still obtain and the vagaries of fortune.

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--Medvedev's characterization of individual leaders seems just, although in some cases his estimates are a trifle absolute. He dismisses the chances of three leaders becoming General Secretary: Kulakov is a "narrow specialist" in agriculture, Polyansky has no standing, and Sholepin is an intriguer. Although these leaders have some serious marks against them, we would not rule out their chances.

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Pravda Recalls Brezhnev's
Ideological Confidence

Amid the speculation over the future of Brezhnev and detente, a *Pravda* editorial on January 16 gave both a boost by reviving the confident approach to ideological competition with the West that Brezhnev took in his "victory through contacts" speech at Alma Ata in August 1973.

On the surface, the editorial is fully in line with the continuing public exhortations for increased ideological vigilance and awareness, which is said to be needed as a result of the "contemporary stage of international relations," i.e., detente. This theme has been the hallmark of the generally defensive nationwide campaign whose main impetus came from the CPSU Central Committee resolution of late last summer on the ideological pluses and minuses of the Belorussian party.

Pravda points out familiar dangers and offers the now time-worn remedies, but, for the first time since the campaign began, it balances this defensive approach with the confidence that Brezhnev displayed at Alma Ata. The editorial states that, as a result of the "correctness and invincibility" of Marxist-Leninist ideology, "we are confident that the expansion of contacts, the exchange of information and the development of ties between...various countries under the conditions of detente will disseminate the truth about socialism and give new supporters access to the idea of scientific communism."

Brezhnev's thesis that communism's ideological strength not only safeguards it from domestic erosion by detente but that detente offers an opportunity to proselytize the faith abroad may have been designed

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partly to overcome the reservations of the party's ideological guardians to his policy. The idea, however, was never enthusiastically endorsed by other Soviet leaders or by the party apparatus. The appearance of the *Pravda* editorial suggests that Brezhnev's long-dormant thesis is not wholly dead, and that its backers feel the time is right to make the point anew.

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Hungary Wants Claims Talks with Bonn

Budapest wants to set up a joint commission with the West Germans to settle Hungarian claims--totaling about \$400 million--against Nazi Germany. Budapest obtained a claims settlement worth \$28 million in 1971 for property confiscated by the Germans.

The Hungarians raised the matter during the recent visit of West German foreign office state secretary Wischniewski. Budapest is apparently seeking compensation for the suffering of those Hungarians (mostly Jews) who were incarcerated in German concentration camps. Budapest had raised the general question of additional claims during Scheel's visit to Hungary last April. Now it has gone a step further by setting a price tag on the claims and proposing the commission.

Wischniewski reportedly agreed only to present the Hungarian suggestion to Bonn. The West Germans are likely to resist Hungarian efforts to reopen the question. One German diplomat said Bonn considers it a dead issue. Another pointedly noted that Hungary was an ally of Germany in World War II and added that domestic political considerations made any discussion of additional claims impossible for Bonn.

Nonetheless, the West Germans cannot flatly reject the Hungarians because Bonn had earlier agreed to entertain any claims that could be reasonably justified, a statement it now regrets. The Hungarians are undoubtedly encouraged by Bonn's recent settlement with Yugoslavia of similar claims. Belgrade was given low interest credits

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in lieu of a cash payment, and Budapest may be looking for the same thing. During Wischnewski's visit the Hungarians once again expressed interest in borrowing large sums from Bonn during the next five-year plan.

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